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ECE CONTRIBUTION AND FOLLOW-UP TO UN GLOBAL PROGRAMMES AND CONFERENCES AND TO UNITED NATIONS PROGRAMMES DESIGNED TO ASSIST DEVELOPING COUNTRIES OF OTHER REGIONS

Note by the Executive Secretary

1. Drawing on its expertise, ECE has contributed to preparations for global conferences, as for example it is currently doing for Habitat II. This effort has been undertaken either in cooperation with other institutions (Cairo Conference) or under its direct responsibility (Beijing Conference).

2. Three elements have to considered in ensuring follow-up: regional monitoring of the respective programmes or plans of action; mainstreaming new concerns and perspectives into current activities; and assisting in the implementation of decisions taken at the conferences. In view of the fact that global conferences request foll-up by the regional commission, and that resources are limited, the mainstreaming dimension is particular important and might therefore be addressed by ECE's subsidiary bodies.

I. THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM'S APPROACH

3. The United Nations conferences held in the 1990s represent a remarkable achievement for the United Nations system as a whole. Through them, the international community has come together to agree on shared values, shared goals and strategies to achieve them. This effort demonstrates one of the greatest advantages of the UN system, the ability to move from consciousness raising, to agenda setting, to agreement by member States, to follow up on conference commitments and to effective assistance for the countries that need help in realizing their commitments.

4. The important regional aspect of the conferences has been reflected in the regional preparatory meetings and activities. The importance of monitoring and cooperation at regional and sub-regional levels has been stressed in all declarations, platforms and plans of actions and endorsed by the General Assembly.

5. Follow up initiatives of the UN system have a two-fold purpose:

- to mobilize the system around priority goals and objectives emerging from the main conferences held in recent years, especially Cairo, Copenhagen and Beijing; and

- to rationalize and strengthen the system's follow-up mechanisms for delivery of coordinated assistance at the country and regional levels.

6. Since follow-up mechanisms for the Rio Conference on Environment and Development are already well in place and are to be reviewed again in 1997, the immediate objective is to ensure an integrated follow-up to the International Conference on Population and Development, the World Social Summit and the Fourth World Conference on Women.

7. The Executive Secretary of ECE, as coordinator of the five regional commissions, presented their joint statement to the 1995 session of ECOSOC devoted to regional follow-up to the major United Nations conferences. This joint presentation provided more policy attention to the regional approaches and activities.

8. ECOSOC acknowledged that the regional commissions should play an important role in assisting countries in each region in the implementation of the recommendations of the conferences. The Council should enhance coordination with and among the regional commissions, including though their more effective participation in its substantive work relating to conference follow-up. In this regard, it felt that, in its consideration of the chosen theme related to conference follow-up, it could benefit from the active participation of the regional commissions, through the submission of reports and dialogue, and that it should develop a more focused dialogue with them.

9. The Administrative Committee on Coordination, chaired by the Secretary General, at its October 1995 meeting established three inter-agency Task Forces to follow-up the global conferences focusing on (i) basic social services for all, (ii) full employment and sustainable livelihood and (iii) the enabling environment for people-centred sustainable development. A fourth ACC inter-agency task force was proposed, to focus on the empowerment and advancement of women, looking at the Cairo, Copenhagen and Beijing conferences in an integrated manner.

10. The ACC called upon the regional commissions to develop concerted plans of action at the regional level in support of the conferences' objectives through a system of increased regional consultations.

11. At the regional level and at the initiative of the Secretary General, a coordinating mechanism of the European members of ACC has been established i.e. regular consultative meetings of the United Nations and other organizations active in the region. A meeting on 26 February 996 will be devoted to the regional follow-up to the United Nations global conferences.

12. Information is provided below on ECE participation in the conferences and their follow-up.

II. INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT

13. The ICPD Programme of Action calls on the United Nations regional commissions along with other organizations functioning at the regional level to play an active role in the implementation of the regional declarations on population and the Programme of Action at the regional and subregional levels through regional initiatives on population and development. These initiatives will include establishing or strengthening regional follow-up mechanisms; promoting cooperation in the critical areas of capacity building, the sharing and exchange of information, experiences, know-how and technical expertise, and the promotion of data collection, analysis and research conducive to policy making along with the dissemination and utilization of research funding. In addition, the Programme of Action invites all international organizations, both regional and global, to provide interested governments with assistance related to project and programme formulation, management, monitoring and evaluation.

14. The Programme of Action recognizes that countries with economies in transition should receive temporary assistance for population and development activities in the light of the difficult economic and social problems they face at present. In response to this request and in compliance with the regional priority areas and actions identified at the 1993 European Population Conference (fertility, status of women and the family, health and mortality, population growth and structure, international migration, international cooperation and generation of policy relevant knowledge) the ECE secretariat has taken a number of initiatives, within its mandate, based on he conclusions of the Consultative Meeting of Countries with Economies in Transition on the International Conference on Population and Development held in 1994 in Budapest, Hungary.

15. Within the framework of its research activities in the field of population, ECE is expanding technical backstopping to countries in transition with the overall objective of promoting the generation and use of policy-relevant knowledge as well as to build bridges between the main areas of concern in the social field in the ECE region: social integration and protection, the status of women and population trends. Among the specific activities that are supported by ECE are a more systematic use of existing sources of population statistics for research and policy analysis, use and dissemination of social and gender relevant information, such as depersonalised data at the individual and household levels, and technical support to nation-wide specialised sample surveys and related analysis. Assistance is supplied in selected methods for collection, processing and analysis of information required to study social and demographic processes as

well as for policy formulation and evaluation in three areas: fertility and the family, population ageing and the status of older persons, and international migration. This assistance is provided in the form of on-line help, visits of experts and training workshops such as the two training workshops on International Migration Surveys in Central and Eastern Europe organized in Warsaw (June 1995) and in Geneva (December 1995).

16. In response to requests from countries in transition, ECE also offered the services of a regional adviser for population and development to these countries to help in the initial phase of the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action. Advisory services in this area encompassed priority setting, needs assessment for assistance, project formulation, and assistance to the management, monitoring and evaluation of population policies and programmes. In this endeavour, ECE strongly supported partnership between the governmental sector, the scientific community and NGOs.

17. ECE population activities are carried out in close cooperation with and with financial support from UNFPA. The ECE programme for 1996-1999 takes explicit account of the needs of countries in transition. All research projects will include a strong technical assistance/training component. In addition, a project has been developed to address the needs of countries in transition for information on population policies and building national capacities for population programme monitoring.

18. Chapter 10 of the ICPD is devoted to international migration in which ECE has considerable work experience. The executive secretaries of the five regional commissions have prepared a proposal on cooperation in the field of international migration. ECE has prepared an outline of the project to be pursued by the regional commissions provided that additional financial resources are secured. In the meantime each regional commission is continuing its on-going programme in close consultations with the UN system task forces established for the follow-up of IPCD.

19. The Executive Secretary of ECE contacted its member States to seek their views on suggested activities that may be undertaken in relation to the ICPD follow-up at the regional and subregional levels including the need for a post-Cairo intergovernmental regional meeting and establishing a regional mechanism for addressing regional and subregional issues related to exchange information and experience on the follow-up to and the implementation of the Recommendations of the European Population Conference and the ICPD Programme of Action.

III. WORLD SUMMIT FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

(a) Preparations and participation in Copenhagen

20. The regional commissions took an active part in preparations for the Summit. ECE closely monitored the preparatory process and inputs were provided for an interagency report on poverty, workshop was organized on the ageing in Europe and North America, and a publication prepared on Rehabilitation Engineering.

21. The ECE participated at the Summit and cooperated with the International Council for Social Welfare, an umbrella NGO with 80 national committees worldwide, to prepare an event at the NGO Forum on "Countries in Transition: Links Between Social and Economic Development Focusing on Central and Eastern Europe" - The Role and Experience of NGOs in Promoting Civil Society. The meeting, which was supported financially by the Nordic Council of Ministers, brought together about 700 participants from a wide variety of countries. The topics included overview of recent economic trends, models of social development and projects, demographic developments, new voluntary sector and training networks. The event was followed by a number of consultative meetings with NGOs to promote East-West cooperation.

22. This was the only meeting devoted to transition processes. The NGO Forum Secretary General, while appreciating the efforts of ICSW and ECE, deplored the fact that "one of the biggest failures of the Forum was the low rate of participation of NGO representatives from Central and Eastern Europe".

23. The ECE also represented ECLAC at the with the Central and Latin American presidents convened by the President of the Interamerican Development Bank. Its also participated in the meeting with the business community organized by the International Chamber of Commerce. A Business Council for Social Development was also constituted at the NGO Forum in Copenhagen.

(b) Decisions by the Social Summit of relevance to ECE

24. The Copenhagen Declaration stresses that economic and social development and environmental protection are interdependent and mutually reinforcing components of sustainable development - a framework to achieve a higher quality of life for all people. It puts forward Principles and Goals which seek a framework which would put people at the centre of development and to direct economies to meet human needs more effectively.

25. The Declaration contains ten commitments at both national and international levels related to enabling economic environment, eradication of poverty, full employment, social integration, equity between women and men, education and health, Africa and least developed countries, environment, structural adjustment programmes, financial resources and improved and sub-regional cooperation.

26. The Declaration makes explicit reference to countries in transition "to promote dynamic, open, free markets, while recognising the need to intervene in markets, to the extent necessary to prevent or counteract market failure, promote stability and long-term investment, ensure fair competition and ethical conduct and harmonize economic and social development, including the development and implementations of appropriate programmes that would entitle and enable people living in poverty and disadvantage, especially women, to participate fully and productively in the economy and society".

27. The highlights of the Copenhagen Programme of Action include development and interaction of market forces conducive to efficiency and social development; integration of economic and social policies, including adjustment, trade finances and taxation in CITs; statistics and data for

monitoring social development; accessibility of transportation, power and energy services at the local community level; small entrepreneurship and access to credit. The expansion of productive employment, antipoverty measures and social integration are also relevant. Mobilization and coordination of regional and international assistance have been requested for the less-advantaged population, including older persons and migrants.

28. Implementation and follow-up envisage national strategies, involvement of civil society and mobilization of financial resources. Consultations are invited with multilateral and bilateral donors for countries in transition.

29. Both the Copenhagen Declaration and Copenhagen Plan of Action give an important role to regional commissions by stating "The Regional Commissions in cooperation with regional intergovernmental organisations and banks could convene on a biennial basis a meeting at a high political level to evaluate a progress made towards fulfilling the outcome of the Summit, exchange views on their respective experiences and adapt appropriate measures".

(c) Follow-up activities

30. The structural changes which have been taking place in the ECE region during the last decade have had a considerable impact on employment trends and income distribution patterns. The importance attached to these problems is reflected in the programme of work of the Senior Economic Advisers to ECE Governments (SEA) and the secretariat's own independent research work.

31. The consequences of economic restructuring on employment and income distribution were examined by the SEA at their thirty-first session in June 1995 on the basis of a report submitted by the delegation of France. This report (which will be followed by a workshop organized by the Government of France in June 1996) examined the repercussions of economic restructuring on employment and the ensuing changes in terms of remuneration, changing work patterns and income distribution. This analysis provided a starting point for discussing possible public policy options in both developed market economies and countries in transition. Other reports and country monographs on the same topic are now under preparation by the SEA and/or experts mandated by them. These studies are intended to be discussed in special meetings and at future regular sessions of the SEA.

32. As part of its analysis of labour market developments in the ECE region the secretariat studies changes in employment, unemployment, and labour market policies in western market economies and countries in transition, and special attention has recently been devoted to the provision of social safety nets and socio-economic implications of mass unemployment in countries in transition. These studies are reflected in the Economic Bulletin for Europe and the Economic Survey of Europe.

33. The on-going regional statistical project on development of social statistics will be relevant to the monitoring of social changes in the ECE region. Work on the promotion of entrepreneurship and development of small and medium enterprises, undertaken by regional advisers, falls within the scope of activities envisaged by the Social Summit Plan of Action. Several

other activities are being considered in consultations with NGOs on issues such as promotion of entrepreneurship and self-employment through small and micro enterprises, ageing and poverty.

IV. FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN

(a) Preparations for and participation in Beijing

34. Following the ECE High-level Regional Preparatory Meeting (Vienna, October 1994), the ECE secretariat was involved in a number of activities organized during the final stage of preparations for the World Conference. It presented its contribution to regional and subregional meetings organized by member States, in particular countries in transition, NGOs and Parliaments of the ECE region. At the intergovernmental level, it participated in the annual session of the Commission on the Status of Women, which acted as the preparatory body for the Conference, and in the meetings of the Ad Hoc Inter-agency Group on Women, which developed a coordinated approach for the contributions made by the various entities of the United Nations system and for their presence at the Conference itself.

35. At Beijing ECE involvement was similarly extensive. The Executive Secretary made a statement at the plenary session, held a press conference jointly with the executive secretaries of the other regional commissions present in Beijing and convened a special meeting of ECE member States on the follow-up to the Conference. The Deputy Executive Secretary coordinated the special event, "Beyond Beijing: Call for Regional Action" jointly organized by the five regional commissions, which was attended by over 400 people and widely covered by the media. ECE also participated in a series of inter-agency meetings and briefings, including a special meeting on the System-wide Medium term Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women (1996-2001). Substantive contributions and keynote speeches were given at special events organized by the United Nations system, the NGO Forum and the High-level Advisory Committee of the Secretary-General.

36. The Beijing Conference offered an opportunity to disseminate widely three recent ECE publications on women: "Women in the ECE Region: A Call for Action", "Women and Men in Europe and North America" (published jointly with Statistics Sweden, EUROSTAT and INSTRAW) and "Time Use of Women in Europe and North America".

(b) Decisions taken by the World Conference and the General Assembly of relevance to ECE

37. The areas of concern highlighted by both the regional and global Platforms for Action are convergent. ECE has programmes of work in a number of them: economic analysis, including employment, statistics, enterprise creation and development, demographics and the environment.

38. Parts V-B (paras. 301-305) and VI-B (paras. 351-352) of the Platform for Action deal respectively with the institutional and financial arrangements at the regional level for the implementation and monitoring of the Platform. In

these texts, a number of functions are explicitly assigned to the regional commissions:

- to mainstream women's issues and the gender perspective within their existing mandate and activities;

- to establish mechanisms and processes to ensure the implementation and monitoring of both the global and regional Platforms for Action;

- to collaborate on gender issues with other regional intergovernmental organizations, NGOs, financial and research institutions and the private sector;

- to promote and assist the pertinent national institutions in monitoring and implementing the Platform for Action; and

- to assist in the mobilization of funds for such implementation.

39. In his report to the General Assembly on the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women (A/50/744), the Secretary-General refers to the paragraphs of the Platform for Action dealing with follow-up at the regional level and states that he "will make every effort to strengthen the gender dimension in all the activities of the regional commissions and to ensure that their capacities are fully utilized to follow up the Platform for Action, and to assist in the coordination of relevant activities by United Nations organizations, including the development of concerted action programmes in support of the objectives of the Conference at the regional level".

40. The Assembly resolution on Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and full implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action", in its preamble, recognizes the important role played by the regional commissions, among others, in the preparatory process of the Conference and the importance of their involvement in implementation of the Platform for Action. Operative paragraphs 9 and 10 state further that the Assembly:

> "Recognizes the importance attached to the regional monitoring of the global and regional platforms for action, by regional commissions and other subregional or regional structures, within their mandates, in consultation with Governments, and the necessity of promoting cooperation among national Governments of the same region in this respect;
>
> "Invites the Economic and Social Council, in order to facilitate the regional implementation, monitoring and evaluation process, to consider reviewing the institutional capacity of the United Nations regional commissions within their mandates, including their women's units or focal points, to deal with gender-related issues in the light of the Platform for Action, as well as the regional platforms and plans of action, and to give consideration, inter alia, and where appropriate, to strengthening the capacity in this respect. "

41. In his statement on programme budget implications of the resolution, the Secretary- General expressed his intention "to review the capacity of the regional commissions to follow up the Platform for Action at the regional level. The results of the review would be reported to the 51st session of the General Assembly in the context of the report requested in operative paragraph 32 of the resolution". That paragraph states that the report would focus on "ways to enhance the capacity of the Organization and of the United Nations system to support the on-going follow-up to the Conference in the most integrated and effective way, including human and financial requirements".

(c) Proposed follow-up activities

42. ECE's follow-up to the Beijing Conference could have three main orientations:

(i) Monitoring

43. In keeping with the role assigned to the regional commissions by the Platform for Action and the Assembly resolution, the ECE secretariat convened a consultative inter-agency meeting in Geneva on 30 January 1996, gathering international organizations active on women's issues in the ECE region, including regional or subregional institutions outside the UN system. Prior to the meeting a questionnaire was circulated asking all the organizations, to indicate the areas and types of activities in which they are involved, as defined by the Regional and Global Platforms for Action. A summary of the 16 replies received was presented at the meeting, during which five additional organizations presented their replies orally. The meeting agreed that the summary should be completed and, in the light of the discussion, further refined since it would constitute a valuable tool for all the organizations concerned, helping to secure transparency and the exchange of information, build up complementarities and synergies, and promote various forms of cooperation, including possible joint programming of activities among agencies that share the same areas of concern.

44. The inter-agency consultation constituted a first step in monitoring the regional and global Platforms for Action within the ECE region. As requested by the ACC, this regional monitoring will also be dealt with at the meetings of the European regional representatives of ACC members where the follow-up to global conferences is one of the main topics of discussion.

(ii) Mainstreaming

45. The Platform for Action strongly emphasized the need for mainstreaming women's issues and the gender perspective in all United Nations entities and organizations, within their respective mandates. At ECE, this has already been accomplished in work on women and statistics, within the framework of the Conference of European Statisticians. The Commission may wish to invite other PSBs to consider possibilities of mainstreaming in the framework of their respective programmes of activities.

(iii) Assistance

46. Following the ECE High-level Regional Preparatory Meeting, the number of requests for the support of the advancement of women in a regional framework has steadily increased, in particular from countries in transition. As envisaged at the inter-agency consultation, ECE may assist in resources mobilization, through its cooperation with the relevant United Nations institutions and regional sources of funding.

(d) Relationships with NGOs

47. The series of United Nations global conferences has considerably changed the relationship between the United Nations and the NGO community. NGOs use the opportunity to organize NGO forums and parallel events that are open to broad public participation prior to or during the conferences. This has resulted in their increasing influence on international decision-making, particularly in the form of inputs into the documents negotiated and adopted by Governments at the conferences. Furthermore, many Governments, the United Nations system and other international organizations look to the NGOs for greater cooperation in programme implementation.

48. As a result, the global policy of the UN system towards NGOs is changing. An open-ended working group has been established at United Nations Headquarters which will report to ECOSOC. In addition, an internal working group has been convened by the Director-General of UNOG in which ECE is taking an active part, paying particular attention to seeking cooperation with the business community.

49. In the ECE region there has been increased interaction between the UN system and the NGO community in connection with preparations for the global conferences. ECE has established close relationships and dialogue with specific groups and caucuses in support of its preparatory and follow-up activities.

V. UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON HUMAN SETTLEMENTS

50. As requested in decision J (50), a separate report has been submitted to the Commission (E/ECE/1340).

VI. ASSISTANCE TO DEVELOPING COUNTRIES OF OTHER REGIONS

51. The consultative process among the regional commissions has been further strengthened particularly with regard to joint follow-up to the UN global conferences. The consultations include some possibilities of identifying resources for translating some of ECE activities into assistance to developing countries of other regions. Cooperation with the Mediterranean countries is one such possibility.

52. Asian, African and Pan-American EDIFACT Boards have expanded their activities and membership. Cooperation with ESCAP was intensified through development of joint training programmes and advising countries on specific trade facilitation measures. Cooperation has also been strengthened with the

International Trade Centre (ITC) and a joint project has been developed to prepare the Handbook on Export Documentation. ECE was invited to participate in the World Bank seminar in November 1995 in Washington to help project leaders working in developing countries to incorporate trade facilitation components into their work programmes.

53. The executive secretaries of the regional commissions discussed possible areas most suitable for interregional cooperation, including the future development of the Global Energy Efficiency 21 initiative. The proposal and preparatory assistance document for this project were transmitted in May 1995 to the DDSMS Energy Planning and Management Branch which has offered to work with the ECE to share the benefits of its experience on the requirements for GEF support. During the last two years, regional and interregional cooperation on energy efficiency has continued to develop along the lines foreseen in Global Energy Efficiency 21 but at a much lower level and slower pace due to lack of adequate financial support.

54. In January 1996 ECE participated in the Regional Seminar on Promotion of Energy Efficiency in Transition Economies in Asia, held by ESCAP in Bangkok and attended by representatives of most Asian countries which are members of both ECE and ESCAP. This led to recommendations for joint ECE/ESCAP guidelines on the development of energy conservation laws in Asian economies in transition drawing on the experience of CIS member States in promoting east-east cooperation. In addition, interregional cooperation could expand with the development of energy efficiency demonstration zones in Asian economies in transition such as those currently under development in Kazakstan. Further interregional cooperation could be achieved by the full support of UNDP and GEF for the Global Energy Efficiency 21 Project involving similar activities in all five regional commissions as a global response to Agenda 21 and to assist signatories of the Framework Convention on Climate Change to meet their treaty obligations in reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

55. As previously reported the United Nations International Comparison Programme covers a number of developing countries with the support of the World Bank; ECE transfers to developing countries of other regions its know-how on statistics, standardization of agricultural produce and transport. The exchange of publications is relevant to developing countries, which also express increasing interest in participating in ECE meetings.